

MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
12/5/11

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Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and his subsequent drive for further

face-to-face negotiations with the Israelis have resulted in an intense, emotional and enthusiastic response from the Arab people, not only in those states supporting Egypt but also in such countries as Syria and occupied Palestine. The slogan of the Sadat supporters is "Peace — not War", but it is assumed by all (including Sadat) that "Peace" means the one in which the occupied Arab lands are returned to Arab control. The dramatic offer which Sadat is making on the Arab side is to accept Israel as a friendly Middle Eastern state with full diplomatic recognition and secure, recognized boundaries.

To Sadat this offer is quid pro quo enough for a return to Israel's 1967 borders, and Arab opinion on this point is divided only on the question of whether his offer has gone too far. Whatever the state of Israeli opinion on the subject is, Prime Minister Begin's position is that although a return to 1967 borders might conceivably be worked out for Sinai, nothing even approaching this will be agreed to by Israel for the West Bank or Gaza areas of Arab Palestine.

Sadat is of course aware of the Begin position, as are his uneasy Saudi supporters. But they believe or hope that the dramatic psychological breakthrough which Sadat has effected, and the hope of peace it offers, will induce the United States to put massive pressure on Begin to accept the Egyptian offer. Further, Sadat and the Saudis alike are unwilling to ~~accept~~ be parties to an agreement which does not provide for a return to Arab control of Arab Palestine — perhaps at the end of some years, and certainly only as a demilitarized entity. Unless reasonable provisions are made for a Palestinian homeland in the West Bank and Gaza, neither Sadat nor the Saudis would have achieved the minimum protection from the threat of overthrow by Arab

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radicals which they believe they need. Sadat has hinted that if the total provisions of an agreement are reasonable from the all-Arab point of view he might sign unilaterally, but he has clearly said that he will not sign if only the Egypt ~~xx~~-Israel portion of the conflict is addressed.

The ~~xx~~ risks are obvious that there will be no give in either the Begin or the Sadat substantive positions at the pending Cairo negotiations or in any parallel private discussions. If Sadat and his Saudi backers ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ come to believe that what they perceive as their daring new position toward peace with Israel is being rejected, they will first probably turn to the U.S. with strong arguments for pressure on Israel. Should this too fail, Sadat might well resign rather than face the massive Arab disillusionment when it becomes apparent that "Peace" was a false slogan based on words which had no mutual meaning to Israel and the Arabs. In any event, ^{the latter} Saudi Arabia and Egypt ~~xx~~ — perhaps under new leadership — would move toward the rejectionist position and would feel obliged to accommodate the anti-western public opinion shift which would ~~xx~~ accompany the disillusion.

To the extent that Israel, before any Cairo conference, ~~xx~~ could be induced to move toward a flexible position on the question of boundaries — or even on the procedures by which they are to be established — the foregoing analysis could change. Much evidence suggests that Israeli public opinion has moved in this direction as a result of Sadat's initiative in visiting Jerusalem. But so far the Prime Minister seems to hope unrealistically that Egypt will abandon the Arab cause and sign a separate ~~xxxxxx~~ peace treaty. Sadat, who ~~xxxx~~ prides himself with some justification in always saying clearly what he means and sticking to it, has stated many times and very recently that this he will never do.

BACKGROUND MATERIAL

*M. 'Reb' Dow
Matt.*

EGYPT:

Support for President Sadat's dramatic peace initiative remains strong throughout Egypt, and has helped convince Sadat that he has struck a responsive chord not only among Egyptians but all Arab people, which will ultimately prevail over the disunity of Arab governments.

In Sadat's

eyes, the gamble at this stage comes down to whether or not Israel will make the kind of concessions necessary to proceed toward a final peace settlement. Egypt's announcement today that it is severing diplomatic relations with those who attended the Tripoli summit -- most notably Syria -- indicates that Sadat intends to take his case to the Arab people and expects cooperation from his erstwhile allies to come at this time only from efforts by Israel, the US, and Arab moderates led by Saudi Arabia. In the meantime, Sadat seems determined to follow through on his word to negotiate with Israel on behalf of all the Arabs, to submit the fruits of his efforts to them, but at all costs to retain Egypt's freedom of action.

SAUDI ARABIA:

Sadat's visit to Israel has posed an awkward dilemma for the Saudi leadership. Saudi leaders feared, and probably still fear, that the visit will result in a major setback for the moderate Arabs' efforts to find a peace settlement -- unless or until the US is willing to put enough pressure

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on Israel to produce meaningful concessions to Sadat. The Saudis do not want to be publicly associated with Sadat's high-risk gamble, in part because they doubt the US will pressure Israel, and in part because they do not want to lose their "honest broker" role with the Syrians and PLO. The Saudis have apparently calmed down following their initial anger toward Sadat for his visit to Jerusalem. They will continue to provide economic aid and privately support his efforts. They will also moderate Syrian reactions because the alternative -- aligning with the Syrians, PLO, and other hard-line states -- is even more unpalatable.

SYRIA:

Despite a number of reports indicating that popular opinion in Syria generally favors the Sadat initiative, the Syrian government and media have reacted vehemently to what they regard as an unconscionable Egyptian concession to Israel. President Asad has been careful, throughout his feud with Sadat, to avoid closing the door to peace negotiations; it was apparently largely through his efforts that the final resolution emerging from the anti-Sadat summit at Tripoli spoke in generalities about confronting the "Zionist plot" but did not reject negotiations. Asad also has not closed the door on a reconciliation with Sadat, but whether this occurs will depend in large measure on whether Israel makes concessions in response to Sadat's initiative.

ISRAEL:

The Begin government maintains that "everything is negotiable," but also insists that it opposes any return to the June 1967 borders, negotiations

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with the PLO, and an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank. Beyond this formal position, however, there is no consensus within the government on what Israel should give in return for "real peace," which is defined in terms of full normalization of relations with the Arabs.

As a result of Sadat's visit, the Israelis believe chances have greatly improved that they can reach a separate agreement with Egypt, and may now be prepared to offer the entire Sinai. To obtain this coveted goal, the Israelis seem to recognize that they must somehow accommodate Sadat's desire for a comprehensive settlement that in principle at least takes into account the interests of the other Arabs, including the Palestinians.

To finesse the problem, the Israelis probably hope primarily to encourage Jordan's King Husayn to make a deal over the West Bank that would clear the way for Sadat and isolate Syria unless it were prepared to be more flexible.

However, the Israelis are likely to offer no more than a limited pullback of their forces initially on the Golan Heights, and at most some form of autonomy on the West Bank that still permitted the Israelis to settle and maintain a military presence there.

JORDAN:

Jordan's King Husayn appears to be privately pleased with Sadat's initiatives, but feels that he cannot risk the total break with Damascus that public support of the Egyptian President would almost certainly bring.

-3-

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In a speech following Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, Husayn praised the Egyptian leader's vision and courage, but criticized his failure to inform his allies about the visit and warned that splits in Arab unity could have serious consequences. Jordan subsequently announced that it would not attend the Cairo Conference unless all other Arab participants in the Middle East dispute attended, but also declined an invitation to the rejectionist summit in Tripoli. For the moment, the King is trying to negotiate an end to the split between Sadat and Asad -- press sources announced yesterday that Husayn will visit Damascus, Cairo and Jidda shortly -- while avoiding public commitment to either position.

The PLO:

PLO chief Yasir Arafat is apprehensive about the possibility that Sadat's initiatives toward Israel will undermine his position as the acknowledged leader of the Palestinian movement. Arafat, however, has attempted to maintain his options by not totally aligning himself with radical critics of Egypt's actions. Authoritative Palestinian commentary on Sadat's visit to Israel, for example, generally has avoided harsh personal attacks on the Egyptian President.

[] These actions

suggest that Arafat's interest in a role for the PLO in any negotiated settlement remains strong.

Arafat's freedom of maneuver, however, has been circumscribed by

-4-

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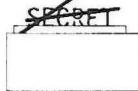
widespread opposition to Sadat's actions in the Arab world as well as in the PLO itself. The Syrians have leaned heavily on the PLO to ensure that the organization's public stand toward Egypt was the same as theirs. Militant opinion within the PLO also has been influential in forcing Arafat to come out strongly against Sadat, and probably was responsible in large part for the harsh Palestinian statement issued in Tripoli on Sunday. In an apparent effort to distance himself from the hard-liners, however, Arafat did not attend the Palestinian press conference during which the statement was issued.

The West Bank:

Public opinion on the West Bank appears to be running generally in favor of Sadat's initiatives, but most residents are withholding final judgment until they see if Sadat's efforts will lead to significant Israeli concessions on the West Bank. West Bank mayors have prepared a generally moderated statement in response to Sadat's visit, reaffirming their support for the PLO, but praising Egypt's sacrifices in behalf of the Palestinian people. It appears unlikely that any West Bank representatives will attend the Cairo Conference, but several notables and one mayor -- Bethlehem's Elias Frayj -- have publicly praised the Egyptian initiative.

Iraq:

Iraq initially condemned Sadat as a traitor and called for his overthrow. It is still calling for a summit meeting to be held in Baghdad in order to reconcile Arab differences and map out a common strategy for the hard-line states and the Palestinians; it has included long-time rival



Syria in the invitations to the meeting. But Iraq's opposition is now focused more on Syria than on Sadat. Baghdad is trying to link Asad with Sadat's "betrayal" by reminding fellow rejectionists of Syria's previous role in formulating negotiating strategies and by suggesting that Syria, too, desires a separate peace with Israel. Baghdad agreed to attend the Tripoli summit in order to call Syria's bluff, and force Asad to renounce support for peace talks and adopt instead the rejectionist stance of no peace, no negotiations and no recognition of Israel. The walkout of the Iraqi representative at Tripoli suggests that the final results of the conference were milder than Baghdad wished.

LIBYA:

Libya has never made a secret of its total opposition to negotiations with Israel, and considers Sadat's willingness to treat directly with the Israelis as a clear betrayal of the Arab cause. President Qadhafi would like to put himself forward as the leader of the Arabs, or at least of the rejectionist Arabs, and this desire largely motivated his call for an anti-Sadat summit. However, most other Arab states -- including those which came to Tripoli for the summit -- do not take his pretensions or his foreign policy positions seriously.

ALGERIA:

Algeria denounced Sadat's trip to Israel and participated, with other Arab hard-liners, in the summit in Tripoli. President Boumediene probably will coordinate his position on Sadat's opening to Israel with Syria. Despite his participation in the Tirpoli summit, Boumediene still attaches consider-

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able importance to Arab solidarity; he will avoid a firm commitment to Arab rejectionists that would limit his flexibility in the future.

MOROCCO:

Morocco's King Hassan was one of the first Arab leaders to support Sadat's peace initiative, and he has continued this support even as the more radical Arab states increase their attacks on Sadat.

[redacted] Hassan believes a military solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict is out of the question and that Arabs must opt for negotiations to achieve a satisfactory settlement. Hassan hopes to play the role of a useful intermediary between the Israelis and Palestine Liberation Organization officials.

-7-

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